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Mr. ABDUL HAMEED KHAN :—" Sir, I am sorry to say my question has not been answered. I want to know whether the fact mentioned in the question actually happened."

The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" Sir, I thought the hon. Member was aware of the fact when he gave us the information. If he wishes to know whether that gentleman was appointed I shall be glad to find out and let him know."

Navigation

Rise in the price of firewood in the Madras City.

*1751 Q.—Mr. C. GOPALA MENON: Will the hon. the Member for Revenue be pleased to state—

(a) whether the attention of Government has been drawn to the abrupt rise in the price of firewood in the city during the last three weeks, and if so, what the causes are;

(b) what is the quantity of firewood brought by rail and water into the city during 1926, 1927 and 1928, and what portion of it is obtained from Government forests;

(c) what area of Government forests has been leased for the purpose during 1928 and what is the number of lessees;

(d) whether it is a fact that areas are auctioned in too big lots for small lessees and if so, what is the size of the lots;

(e) whether the Government have provided alternative facilities for fuel supply to the city by reason of the closing of the Buckingham canal;

(f) what is the extent of casuarina plantations owned by Government and whether it would be feasible to increase the area;

(g) whether Government would consider the advisability of requesting the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway Company to supply enough wagons to keep up the supply of firewood to the city; and

(h) whether Government propose to consider at an early date any means of controlling rise in price of firewood in the city or of increasing supplies of it?

A.—(a), (e) & (h) The Government are aware that subsequent to the closure of the Buckingham canal (Adyar-Covelong reach) the retail price of firewood in the City of Madras rose from ten annas to fourteen annas per 56 lb. In order to facilitate the transport of firewood the Government have ordered that the improvements to the canal should be taken up by small lengths, of a mile or so at a time, leaving intervals of one week, and allowing the traffic to pass during such intervals. G.O. No. 673 I., dated 25th February 1929, issued by the Government in that connexion has been published.

(b), (c), (d) & (f) The Government have no information. A report has been called for.

(g) The Government propose to await the effect of the orders in G.O. No. 673 I., dated 25th February 1929, for a period of one month. If at the end of that period it is found that there has been no appreciable reduction in the price of firewood the suggestion will be considered.

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Mr. C. Gopala Menon :—"May I know whether Government are not aware of the fact that there is profiteering going on in the city with regard to firewood supply ?"

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—"I don't know of any profiteering being carried on ; but I think it is very likely. (Laughter)."

Mr. C. Gopala Menon :—"With reference to answer to clause (g) may I know what is the channel or means of communication to the Government for ascertaining the effect of their recent order on the price of firewood in the city ?"

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—"We have asked the Collector to find out the market price of firewood in the city for one month."

Mr. C. Gopala Menon :—"With reference to clause (e) may I know whether Government will set apart smaller areas for auction in future for the supply of firewood for merchants in the city ?"

The hon Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—"When the report called for is received, Government will consider the matter of price of firewood, and among other items, when the time comes I shall submit the hon Member's suggestion to the Hon'ble the Forest Member. (Laughter.)"

Mr. S. Satyamurti :—"With reference to clauses (b) to (h) may I know whether when the report is received the Government will place it on the table of the House ?"

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—"It will be considered when the report is received."

Mr. S. Satyamurti :—"With reference to clause (e) may I know whether Government propose to consider the means of keeping down the price of firewood either by means of legislation or by executive orders ; and if they do not intend to do so, the reasons for the same ?"

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—"We will await the report we have called for ; till then we will defer all measures."

Mr. Abdul Hameed Khan :—"With reference to clause (b) may I know why Government did not request the Madras and Southern Mahratta Railway to supply wagons ?"

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—"Government are not aware of any shortage."

Mr. Abdul Hameed Khan :—"The answer to clause (g) says 'Government propose to await the effect of the orders in G.O. No. 673 I., dated 25th February 1929, for a period of one month.' I want to know if there is shortage at that period, Government will take steps to ask the railway company to supply more wagons ?"

The hon. Sir Norman Marjoribanks :—"If we think there is shortage we will bring it to the notice of the railway company."

Mr. S. Satyamurti :—"May I know whether the Collector's inquiry includes also the subject of profiteering ?"

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The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" I don't think the Collector will report on that. He is merely asked to report on the price of firewood."

Mr. S. SATYAMURTI :—" May I know whether Government are not prepared to take steps by means of rules to prevent the rise in price of firewood ? "

The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" That is a matter to be considered only if the price keeps high."

Mr. G. HARISARVOTTAMA RAO :—" May I know whether Government consider that they cannot cheapen the price of fuel by getting railway concession for the time being ? "

The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" I am sorry I did not follow the question."

Mr. G. HARISARVOTTAMA RAO :—" May I know whether Government considered the question of asking the railway to carry fuel at a concession for the time being and thus lower the price of firewood ? "

The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" We have not considered the question."

Dr. B. S. MALLAYYA :—" Sir, there are two varieties of fuel, what is called general wood and the other, casuarina, and the price of casuarina is going up day by day. Do Government realise that it is their action that is responsible for this sudden rise in price, and so will they be pleased to open Government firewood depots where firewood may be sold to poor people and Government servants at a cheap rate ? "

The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" The hon. Member's suggestion will be considered in due course."

Mr. G. HARISARVOTTAMA RAO :—" Cannot the railway freight on firewood be reduced ? "

The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" I am sorry it is not in my power." (Laughter.)

Mr. G. HARISARVOTTAMA RAO :—" Well, did he try to do anything to lower the price ? "

The hon. Sir NORMAN MARJORIBANKS :—" I understand that as a matter of fact the price of firewood has gone down."

Village Establishments

Allowance to karnams attending taluk offices.

* 1752 *Q.*—Mr. K. V. R. SWAMI : Will the hon. the Member for Revenue be pleased to state—

(*a*) whether the question of the grant of allowances to the karnams attending taluk offices has been finally settled ; and

(*b*) what the decision is ?

A.—(*a*) & (*b*) The question has not yet been settled as the financial results of the recent restoration of the village officers have not yet been finally worked out.